

# United Nations

## Press Release

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Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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Prepared by Central News

DH/827

13 February 1991

### W E D N E S D A Y   H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Security Council decides to meet tomorrow in formal private session on situation between Iraq and Kuwait.
- ◆ Secretary-General deplores loss of civilian life following reports of allied bombing of a defence shelter in Baghdad which apparently caused hundreds of civilian casualties.
- ◆ Secretary-General discusses with Canadian Prime Minister proposals for United Nations peace-keeping role and reconstruction of Gulf region once hostilities have ended in area.
- ◆ Secretary-General appeals for immediate resumption of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to all the affected civilian population of Angola.

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The Security Council this afternoon convened a meeting on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and, following a procedural discussion, voted by 9 in favour to 2 against (Cuba, Yemen), with 4 abstentions (China, Ecuador, India, Zimbabwe) to discuss the matter in a formal private meeting scheduled for 11 a.m. tomorrow, 14 February.

Members voting in favour of holding debate behind closed doors were Austria, Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Romania, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States and Zaire.

Today's meeting was convened in response to requests made last month by the representatives of Cuba, Yemen and the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) that the Council hold a public meeting on the situation in the Gulf region.

Proposing this afternoon that the Council hold a private debate, the representative of the United Kingdom said such a format would allow a careful

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consideration of all developments away from the glare of publicity. The Council should do nothing to detract from its unity of purpose or to blur the signal being sent to the outside world.

Opposing the United Kingdom's proposal, the representative Yemen said that to discuss the situation behind closed doors was in contravention of the traditional democratic and transparent character of United Nations proceedings. Cuba, also in opposition to the United Kingdom proposal, recalled that the Council had adopted 12 resolutions on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait in full view of television and the press.

Statements in explanation of vote on the proposal were made by the representatives of the Soviet Union, the United States, India, Austria, France, Belgium, Ecuador and Zaire.

Tomorrow's meeting will be the first time the Council has met formally in private on a substantive issue since 1975, when it convened to consider the situation in Western Sahara. Prior to that meeting, it held formal private meetings in 1974 on Cyprus and in 1973 on the Middle East.

By the decision adopted today, the Council also decided that a verbatim record of the meeting would be circulated as an unrestricted document in accordance with the Council's rule 49 of its provisional rules of procedure, which states that "... the verbatim record of each meeting of the Security Council shall be made available to the representatives of the Security Council and to the representatives of any other States which have participated in the meeting not later than 10 a.m. of the first working day following the meeting".

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said today through his Spokesman that he had learned with profound regret about the reports of today's bombing of a defence shelter in Baghdad that apparently caused hundreds of civilian casualties, including many women and children.

While the Secretary-General did not have full details about the circumstances of this tragic incident, he was, none the less, dismayed by the magnitude of the casualties and deplored the loss of civilian life, the Spokesman said.

The Spokesman also announced that Ambassador Thomas Pickering of the United States had met this morning with the Secretary-General to show him some aerial photographs and documents which were said to show that the United States and members of the international coalition co-operating with Kuwait were targetting military installations and not civilian locations in Iraq.

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A United Nations official said today that the Secretary-General had met yesterday in Ottawa with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney with whom he discussed Canadian proposals for the establishment of a United Nations

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peace-keeping force once the war is over. They also discussed proposals for a conference of legal experts to strengthen international law against pollution as a weapon of war and a United Nations-sponsored global summit on the instruments of war and weapons of mass destruction.

The official said discussions between the Secretary-General and Mr. Mulroney concentrated on the post-war period and a possible role for the United Nations in the field of peace-keeping and reconstruction of the region once hostilities have ended. While Mr. Perez de Cuellar and the Canadian Prime Minister agreed that it might be considered premature to deal with the post-war period at this particular moment, the Secretary-General found it important for the Organization to be in a position to act decisively when needed, the official said.

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The Secretary-General said today through his Spokesman that he was "deeply concerned" about the continued suspension of the Special Relief Programme for Angola and its impact on some 2 million innocent victims seriously affected by drought and civil conflict. He appealed to the Angolan Government to take the action necessary to permit the immediate resumption of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to all the affected civilian population of Angola.

In December last year, less than nine weeks after the first relief convoys began operating, the Government suspended relief convoys going to areas controlled by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) -- its political opponent. The Government cited UNITA actions which hampered the distribution of assistance to the affected population. Given the nature of the Programme which required access to all the affected population, the United Nations had no choice but suspend its special relief operations.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar was convinced that given the commitment of the Government and of UNITA to the basic terms of the Programme, the difficulties could be resolved so that the relief activities could be resumed. The basic terms include guarantees for the relief assistance to be neutral and available to all civilian population, and the safe passage of personnel.

In an effort to bring about a resolution of the present stalemate, the Secretary-General has asked James O.C. Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, to undertake a mission to Luanda as soon as possible to consult with the Government.

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**DH/828**

# United Nations

## Press Release

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Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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Prepared by Central News

DH/828  
14 February 1991

### THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Security Council holds private meeting on situation between Iraq and Kuwait.
- ◆ Joint United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization mission to go to Baghdad on Saturday, 16 February.
- ◆ UNESCO experts fear land war might imperil Mideast historic sites.

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The Security Council this afternoon met in private on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait following a procedural discussion, which took place during informal consultations earlier today.

The decision to meet behind closed doors was taken at a meeting last night by a recorded vote of 9 in favour to 2 against (Cuba, Yemen), with 4 abstentions (China, Ecuador, India, Zimbabwe). Those voting in favour of holding the debate behind closed doors were Austria, Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Romania, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States and Zaire.

In a separate development, a United Nations official said today that Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar had been asked by correspondents upon entering Security Council consultations this morning to comment on recent charges by Iraqi authorities. In reply, the Secretary-General said that he did not think the attack on him was very courageous because he, the Secretary-General, was the least aggressive and the least important of all their enemies. He was not going to respond to the insults.

Asked if a possible cease-fire would be discussed at the Council meeting this afternoon, the Secretary-General replied that he did not think a cease-fire at this stage without a firm Iraqi commitment to withdraw from Kuwait would be acceptable to countries working together with Kuwait. The United Nations official said that when asked about the Soviet initiative to send an envoy to Baghdad, the Secretary-General had replied that any proposal for a peaceful solution to the crisis had to be encouraged.

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The heads of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have decided, in consultation with Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, to send a joint humanitarian mission to Baghdad on Saturday, 16 February.

The mission will deliver emergency medical supplies for children and mothers in all areas of under Iraqi control, and will seek to ascertain essential health care needs.

The WHO Director-General, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, and the UNICEF Executive Director, James Grant, have agreed that the mission will leave for Baghdad from Teheran.

It is expected to remain in Iraq for about one week. Meanwhile, arrangements are being made to ensure the safety and protection of all members of the mission.

The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), currently operating in Iraq's four neighbouring countries -- Jordan, Iran, Syria and Turkey, reported yesterday that it is short some \$3 million to enable it to complete its relief programme. The UNDRO said that in view of extensive obligations already undertaken, donors were requested to transfer pledges as soon as possible.

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Cultural property experts from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have voiced fears that thousands of historic sites across the Middle East were now in danger.

In a press release made available at Headquarters today, the Chief of UNESCO's International Stands Section, Lyndel Prott, said the concern applied to the whole area, not just Iraq and Kuwait. He drew attention to the Islamic sites of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, and an estimated 10,000 sites of archeological importance in Iraq.

All Mideastern countries are parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which calls on belligerents to protect cultural sites. Mr. Prott, who monitors the observance of the Convention, said that although the United States and the United Kingdom were not parties, they teach its principles to their armed forces.

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**DH/829**

# United Nations

## Press Release

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Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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Prepared by Central News

DH/829

15 February 1991

### FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Secretary General reacts to reports of Iraqi statement mentioning possibility of its withdrawal from Kuwait if certain conditions are met.
- ◆ Security Council continues private meeting on Persian Gulf situation.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar this morning reacted to reports of an Iraqi statement, mentioning the possibility of its withdrawal from Kuwait if certain conditions are met.

On arrival at United Nations Headquarters, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said in reply to questions by correspondents that the Iraqi suggestion, which mentioned withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait for the first time, needed to be studied carefully.

Asked if he was disturbed by the Iraqi linkage between the Iraq/Kuwait conflict and the Palestinian question as one condition for withdrawal, the Secretary-General replied again that the proposal needed careful consideration.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said that the United Nations was prepared to assist and supervise in case of such a withdrawal and that contingency plans had been worked on since the beginning of the conflict.

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The Security Council continued this afternoon its private meeting on the situation in the Persian Gulf.

Speaking to the press before entering the Council, the Permanent Representative of Yemen, Abdella Saleh Al-Ashtal, said the Iraqi announcement this morning, mentioning the possibility of its withdrawal from Kuwait, was a major breakthrough. He said the Council should look for ways to implement its resolutions in order to have a peaceful end, now that the Iraqis were saying that they would withdraw from Kuwait.

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Also talking to the press at Headquarters, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, called the announcement "fundamentally contradictory and flawed", because the conditions were all "unacceptable". He expressed hope, however, that the Iraqi communication was an indication that the word withdrawal was now in the Iraqi vocabulary. Sir Hannay made it clear that the document was not in any form going to be the basis for a peaceful settlement or agreement.

This morning, after Council consultations, the Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, told correspondents that "the positive news from Iraq" had been received with satisfaction and hope in Moscow. The statement was however contradictory and needed careful consideration. Ambassador Vorontsov said his Government was looking forward to a visit of a representative of President Saddam Hussein to Moscow.

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In a separate development, members of the military coalition against Iraq continue to keep the United Nations informed about its operations in the Persian Gulf conflict.

The United Kingdom's Ambassador to the United Nations, Sir David Hannay, informed the Security Council President yesterday in a letter that air action had been directed exclusively at military objectives, using precision weapons wherever possible, particularly in areas where there might be civilians near the targets. He said all targets were carefully selected either because they posed a threat to coalition forces or because they supported Iraq's illegal occupation of Kuwait.

The British Ambassador said his Government had informed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) of 10 missing British pilots believed to be prisoners of war in Iraqi hands. As yet, no notification as to their capture and whereabouts had been received by the Red Cross, he said.

In a similar letter to the United Nations, dated 8 February, United States Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering said that the coalition forces had taken every precaution to minimize collateral damage to civilian facilities. Despite the destructive potential of modern warfare, such damage had been extremely limited, he said.

Mr. Pickering further reported that Iraqi aircraft continued to fly to Iran bringing the total of Iraqi airplanes currently in Iran to 130. He said the Iranian Government had given clear assurances that it would detain these aircraft until the conclusion of the current conflict.

The United States Ambassador said he was pleased to report that the flow of oil caused by Iraqi forces from the facilities at al-Ahmadi in Kuwait had been halted. He said the United States was continuing its monitoring of other oil facilities that might be leaking into the waters of the Gulf.

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In other communications, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz has termed the allied bombing of what he called a civilian shelter in Baghdad "deliberate", committed by the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) -- and Zionist forces.

In a letter to the Secretary-General issued yesterday, Mr. Aziz further said that at the time of the bombing there were about 400 civilians, most of them women, children and elderly persons, seeking protection in the shelter.

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**DH/830**

# United Nations

## Press Release

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Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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Prepared by Central News

DH/830  
19 February 1991

### T U E S D A Y   H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Ambassador of Soviet Union informs Security Council of meeting between Soviet President and Iraqi Foreign Minister in Moscow yesterday, at which Soviet peace plan, proposing rapid start of withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in accordance with Council resolutions, was presented.
- ◆ Secretary-General expresses hope that Soviet peace proposal, conveyed to him by Soviet Ambassador, will facilitate peaceful outcome of Persian Gulf crisis.
- ◆ International Committee of the Red Cross expresses concern about plight of civilians in Iraq and Kuwait.

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The Security Council this afternoon held consultations on the Persian Gulf conflict.

The Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, informed Council members of yesterday's talks between the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, at which a Soviet peace proposal was discussed.

He said the talks proceeded from the assumption that the current spiral of the crisis situation in the Persian Gulf called for "immediate and resolute measures to avoid further escalation of the conflict, to save thousands of lives and to prevent the threat of disruption of the ecological balance for the whole region".

The Soviet Ambassador went on to say that President Gorbachev had proposed a plan of specific actions in the course of a "prolonged and meaningful exchange" of views on the military operations and on the whole range of problems that brought about those operations.

He said the plan proceeded from the necessity of strictly abiding by the mandate as envisaged in Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis. The key element of the plan consisted of securing a "rapid start" of a withdrawal

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of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, which would allow an immediate end to the bloodshed.

The Soviet Ambassador expressed the hope that the proposal would be considered in "a most serious manner". His Government was expecting very soon a reaction from Baghdad. Given that reaction, it would be possible to substantively discuss practical measures.

Ambassador Vorontsov said the current situation called for a "cautious, responsible approach. This was not the case for loud and spectacular initiatives, but one for serious diplomatic process". The effectiveness of such a process would determine prospects for a speedy turn towards a political settlement on the basis of Council decisions with due regard to an important role for the Council in maintaining international peace and security.

The Soviet Ambassador told correspondents after the meeting that his Government expected the arrival of Foreign Minister Aziz in Moscow tomorrow, and that it was looking forward to the positive reply of the Iraqi Government.

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A United Nations official announced today that Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar had expressed hope that the Soviet efforts would facilitate the peaceful outcome of the crisis on the basis of Security Council resolutions.

Last night at his residence, the Secretary-General received Ambassador Vorontsov of the Soviet Union, who gave him a confidential letter from Soviet President Gorbachev. The letter given to the Secretary-General was said to be similar to the one handed to the Heads of State or Government of France, the United Kingdom, the United States and China.

The Ambassador also briefed the Secretary-General on the talks held in Moscow between the Iraqi Foreign Minister and President Gorbachev.

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Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Baghdad have reported a steady deterioration in the living conditions of the civilian population.

In a press communique issued yesterday, the Red Cross also expressed concern about the plight of civilians in other parts of Iraq and Kuwait, to which it has not yet had access. The nine-member delegation in Baghdad confirmed that there was a shortage of drinking water because of damage to the supply system, and a lack of fuel and electricity. The group would shortly be carrying out surveys in other major urban areas to gain a more comprehensive picture of the situation.

According to the communique, the Red Cross, which has already sent in two convoys of medicines and medical supplies, is in contact with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and plans to send sanitary engineers and water purification equipment to help counter the growing risk of epidemics.

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**DH/831**

# United Nations

## Press Release

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Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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Prepared by Central News

DH/831  
20 February 1991

### W E D N E S D A Y   H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Secretary-General calls Soviet peace proposal presented to Iraqi Foreign Minister in Moscow "a unique opportunity".
- ◆ Special Committee on Charter debates Soviet proposal to increase roles of regional groups and Secretary-General in maintaining peace and security.
- ◆ Chairman of Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons says Gulf war is affecting current negotiations on treaty to ban production, storage and use of such weapons.
- ◆ United Nations and Government of the Sudan reach agreement on emergency assistance to that country.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar today, in reply to questions by correspondents, called the Soviet peace plan which was discussed in Moscow on Monday, at a meeting between Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, "a unique opportunity". Commenting on the fact that the Iraqi Minister had not yet given any response, the Secretary-General said it was understandable if the Iraqi authorities might need another 24 hours to make a decision.

In a related development, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait, Mohammad Abulhasan, reacted to the Soviet peace initiative following Security Council consultations yesterday on the Gulf crisis. He told correspondents that before any negotiations could begin, Iraq had to accept all Council resolutions on the matter and certain resolutions in particular, because they had to do with the sovereignty of Kuwait. Only a rapid and massive withdrawal would be accepted by the Kuwaiti Government, he said.

In other news, Cuba has circulated three draft resolutions in the Security Council aimed at promoting a peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf. The texts were presented during the Council's formal private meetings last week.

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By one text, the Council would establish an ad hoc committee, composed of all 15 Council members, to examine the current situation in the Gulf, and to consider possible formulas for halting armed actions and achieving a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of the Council's resolutions on the subject.

By another Cuban text, the Council would demand that the bombings of Iraqi cities be halted immediately. The Council would also request that negotiations be intensified to peacefully resolve the situation without further resort to force.

The third draft resolution would have the Council ask the Secretary-General to renew his mediation efforts without delay.

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Beginning its general debate last Friday, the Special Committee on the Charter and Strengthening the Role of the Organization has been discussing a Soviet proposal which was introduced at its 1990 session.

The Soviet initiative proposed to increase the roles of regional groups and the Secretary-General in maintaining peace and security. It also called for expanding co-operation between regional groups and the United Nations to maintain peace and contain conflicts. It suggested further that the Security Council receive reports on all regional and local conflicts.

In the discussion last Friday of the proposal, two speakers from the Soviet Union said it was firmly based on Articles in the Charter which envisaged the use of regional groups in conflict resolution.

Among those speaking in the general debate yesterday, the representative of Finland, Kari Hakapaa, said the Special Committee should consider the ways and means of enhancing the role of the International Court of Justice in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Suggestions that the Secretary-General might turn to the International Court for advisory opinions deserved attention, he said.

Speaking for Germany, Alex Berg, said one proposal, which involved a new approach to United Nations fact-finding activities and should be expanded, was election-monitoring missions. Such monitoring did not fall under fact-finding, but was rather a part of conflict convention.

The representative of the United Kingdom, Anthony Aust, said the initiative of the Secretary-General to get advisory opinions on cases which might go to the International Court of Justice was of questionable value. The Charter did not provide for such a role for the Secretary-General, he said.

For the United States, Robert Rosenstock said the Soviet proposal contained elements that might be focused upon in more detail. He shared the

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hesitations voiced by other delegations on an enhanced role for the Secretary-General in the area of advisory opinions. Efforts at enhancing mechanisms for fact-finding should continue, he said.

On Friday, the representative of Cuba, Rene Mujica Cantelar, urged the Special Committee to examine the voting procedure in the Security Council. He cited particularly the vote on resolution 678 (1990) setting the 15 January deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Referring to the abstention of a permanent Council member in that vote, he said the adoption of the resolution violated Article 27 of the Charter which required affirmative votes by all permanent members on substantive matters.

The representative of the United Kingdom, Anthony Aust, said in reply that the Council had agreed for 40 years that an abstention by a permanent member did not invalidate Council votes.

Also on Friday, the representative of Libya, Abdussalam Sergiwa, outlined a proposal for strengthening the role of the Security Council through suspending or restricting the permanent members' right of veto and not using the principle of consensus in some cases, "to defend acts of aggression, occupation and injustice".

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The Gulf war was having two effects on current negotiations on a chemical weapons treaty that would ban the production, storage and use of such weapons. This was stated yesterday by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Sergei Batsanov of the Soviet Union.

At a press conference in Geneva, he said that on the one hand, the war was showing that the Conference was "rather late in concluding the convention", and that there was a need to eliminate chemical weapons as soon as possible. On the other hand, he said, some States were reserving their position on certain issues pending the outcome of the current conflict in the Gulf.

In any event, Ambassador Batsanov said negotiators were pressing ahead, trying to prepare the ground for a decisive break-through on a treaty this year. The remaining difficulties were of a political nature, directly affecting the security of future States parties to the convention, he said.

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Agreement has been reached on the provision of emergency assistance to the drought-stricken Sudan, where famine threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands.

In a new round of negotiations -- between the Sudanese President, Omer Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir, and the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Decolonization and Trusteeship, James Jonah -- it was agreed that

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the United Nations would provide the overall umbrella for emergency and relief operations in the country.

The World Food Programme would manage the port handling and primary transportation of the food aid, and the Sudanese Minister of Commerce would be the focal point for the overall relief operation.

According to the agreement, the Sudanese Government and the United Nations further reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of Operation Lifeline Sudan and its effective functioning.

The agreement follows a recent appeal by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for \$110 million to provide basic food relief to an estimated 20 million starving people in Africa.

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